

Going Green While Cleaning: Greener, Safer Cleaning:

Ever wonder whether the cleaning supplies you use are safe for your health, or good for the environment? Many cleaning products contain harmful chemicals that can be avoided if you look for the right product. Check out these tips on how to clean in a safer and greener manner.

Buying Green Cleaning Supplies:

- When shopping for cleaning supplies, beware of products that claim to be ‘natural,’ ‘biodegradable,’ non-toxic,’ and other general green claims. These labels do not always ensure that a product is completely environmentally safe. Your best bet is to look at the ingredients, and be able to identify those that are potentially harmful to your health and the environment.
- If possible, look for products that are dye-free and fragrance-free. These additives are unnecessary, and some fragrances may contain hormone-disrupting phthalates.
- Purchase cleaners in bulk and in concentrated formulas. Concentrated formulas use less water.



Cleaning & Air Quality:

- Open windows while cleaning, or put on a fan to ventilate the air. This will help reduce the amount of toxic materials and substances that you may inhale.

Disposing of Cleaning Products:

- Properly dispose of old cleaning products. Don't throw them in the trash or pour them down the drain. They will either end up in a landfill, or could contaminate water supplies. Check your local listings for places to recycle chemicals and electronics. Earth911.com has a search engine that will allow you to search for places that accept household waste and cleaners.

Third Party Certified: Look for products that have been reviewed by an unbiased third party to verify that the product is in fact ‘green’ and safe for the environment. Here are a few of the third party certified companies to look for:

- EPA's "DfE", or "Design for the Environment"
www.epa.gov/dfe/pubs/projects/formulat/formpartc.htm -
consumerclean



- "Green Seal" www.greenseal.org



- "Green Guard" www.greenguard.org



- "EcoLogo" www.terrachoice-certified.com/en/ EcoLogo



Making Your Own Cleaning Supplies:

If you'd prefer to make your own cleaning supplies, here are some recipes provided by Mrs. Clean USA, and Discovery Channel's Planet Green section.

Glass Cleaner:**Homemade Vinegar Glass Window Cleaners**

Mix in a spray bottle:

- 1 cup white vinegar
- 1 cup water

Use to clean countertops, stovetops, windows and mirrors. Because vinegar is acidic, it will kill most mold and mildew, bacteria, and germs. Do not use on marble or other stone floors because it will damage the surface.

Oven Cleaner:

- 1 cup or more baking soda
- Water
- A squirt or two of liquid detergent

Spray water on the bottom of your oven, and then cover stains and food with a generous amount of baking soda. Spray some more water on top of the baking soda and let it set overnight. In the morning, wipe off the mixture. Use a little bit of detergent and a sponge to wipe up any leftover residue. If all of the grime does not come off, repeat with more water and baking soda.

Mold Killer:

- 2 teaspoons tea tree oil
- 2 cups water

Combine in a spray bottle, shake to blend, and spray on mold or mildew. Do not rinse.

Furniture Polish:

- 1/2 tsp oil, such as olive (or jojoba, a liquid wax)
- 1/4 cup vinegar or fresh lemon juice

Mix ingredients in a glass jar. Use a soft rag to dip into the solution and wipe onto wood surfaces. Seal the jar, and you can use the mixture again later.

Uses for Baking Soda:

Baking soda is a safe alternative to many household cleaners. Here are a few different ways that baking soda can be used to clean your home.

- Clear a clogged drain by mixing 1/2 cup of baking soda with 1/2 cup of white vinegar. Pour down drain followed by 2 cups of boiling water.

- Deodorize your dishwasher by sprinkling ½ cup of baking soda on the bottom of your dishwasher before running a cycle.
- Deodorize a kitchen sponge or towel by soaking in 2 cups of warm water, 2 tbsp of baking soda and 5 drops of tea tree oil over night.
- Deodorize your carpet or rug by sprinkling baking soda over it and vacuuming up after a half an hour.
- If you have a moldy or mildew shower curtain, you can throw it in the washing machine with a cup of baking soda added with your detergent, and during the rinse cycle add a cup of vinegar.
- To keep weeds from growing in between paved stones without using pesticides, sprinkle baking soda in between the cracks.



If possible, avoid cleaners containing:

Alkyl phenol ethoxylates (APEs)

Diethanolamine (DEA)

Triethanolamine (TEA)

Nerve-damaging butyl cellosolve (window cleaners)

Chlorine bleach

Formaldehyde (carcinogen in air fresheners, and furniture polish)

Phenol

Phosphates (in some laundry & dishwasher detergents)

Sodium hydroxide (in oven cleaners)

Hydrochloric acid (corrosive to skin, found in toilet, tub, and tile cleaners)

Ammonia

Fragrances containing phthalates

Triclosan (antibacterial in hand sanitizer and antibacterial soap)

Petroleum-based ingredients

Benzene

Perchloroethylene (carpet and upholstery shampoo)

Resources Used:

Planet Green. *10 Money-Saving, Eco-Friendly Things You Can Do with Baking Soda.*

<http://planetgreen.discovery.com/home-garden/eco-friendly-baking-soda.html>

Planet Green. *Detox Your Home: Assemble a Green Cleaning Kit.* <http://planetgreen.discovery.com/home-garden/assemble-a-green-cleaning-kit.html>

<http://www.greenamericatoday.org/pubs/realgreen/articles/greencleaners.cfm>

Planet Green. *How to Go Green: Cleaning.* <http://planetgreen.discovery.com/go-green/green-cleaning/green-cleaning-top-tips.html>

The Green Guide. *Cleaning Products.* <http://www.thegreenguide.com/buying-guide>

McNally, Shelagh. (2009). *Green Living: Six Household Chemicals to Avoid.*

<http://www.greenlivingonline.com/article/six-household-chemicals-avoid>

<http://www.mrs-cleanusa.com/tips/make-glass-cleaner.html>

Disclaimer: This information is offered as guidelines. Links to various sources are included when available. Baltimore County does not endorse nor recommend specific products.